

Case Study

Case Study (6 March 2019)

The Compass Team at Amaze interviewed two staff members at 4Sight Vision Support, Project Development Worker Susie Brown and CEO Nik Demetriades, for this case study. The case study shows how the charity used data from Compass West Sussex, the 'disability register' for the county, which is held by the Compass Team at Amaze. There are around 2300 0 to 25 year olds with significant special educational needs and disabilities on Compass West Sussex and that figure is rising steadily. Data is updated every two years.

Basic Profile

Established in 1921, 4Sight Vision Support is the leading sight loss charity supporting the visually impaired community of West Sussex. The charity has over 2000 members and 300 volunteers and is based in Bognor Regis. As Susie explains, "Sight loss can happen to any one of us at any time and at the heart of our holistic and person-centred services, is a commitment to ensure a diagnosis of sight loss is not a one-way road to loss of independence and isolation."

- **Before involvement**

A survey in 2018 revealed that 4Sight Vision Support services were only reaching small numbers of children and young people. As Nik explains, "In a recent Membership & Stakeholder Survey, our findings showed most of our beneficiaries are people over 65 years old and only a small amount of our work is with children and young people with Visual Impairment (VI) and other disabilities. As a result, we carried out a Mapping Project in summer 2018 to establish what work is already being done by our colleagues in the voluntary sector and statutory sectors to support VI children and young people."

Through the Mapping Project, the organisation wanted find out:

- How many visually impaired children and young people (VI CYP) are resident in West Sussex and where they are located;
- What services and activities, if any, are targeted specifically at and for VI YP;
- What services and activities are targeted at a broader group of SEND CYP, but which might include a cohort of VI CYP,
- What 'gaps' in provision exist for VI CYP in West Sussex.

“Ultimately” says Susie, “the aim of the Mapping Project was to ensure that we become better informed about what provision there already is for VI CYP and to try to identify where there may be any gaps in services. We were also very keen to avoid any duplication of services and if necessary, to build relationships with colleagues in the sector who may wish to work in partnership with us should there be any gaps in provision.”

- **Participation**

Susie Brown attended the SEND Provider Forum meeting on 26 June 2018 and heard about the work of Amaze and the Compass project. The forum is for organisations commissioned by West Sussex County Council to provide Short Breaks for 0 to 18 year olds with special educational needs and disabilities.

Hoping that Compass West Sussex data would help find answers to her questions, Susie emailed the Compass Team at Amaze shortly after the meeting. “After a very straightforward exchange of emails and a short telephone call with the Compass Database Manager, I was amazed (no pun intended!) to receive the data within a couple of days. It was such a surprise to get help so fast – what a fantastic service and very different to trying to acquire data from statutory services for example, which is such a long drawn out process. The Compass Team provided us with really detailed information that I could use straight away to inform our Mapping Project”, says Susie.

- **Impact**

4Sight Vision Support put Compass West Sussex data to good use.

“The Compass data allowed us to get a feel for the numbers of VI CYP in West Sussex and it told us what districts they live in, so straight away that meant we could talk to organisations we knew of in those areas to start to build up a picture of activities and services area by area”, says Susie.

Nik is excited about the future for both 4Sight Vision Support and the VI CYP community in West Sussex. “Compass West Sussex data has allowed us to begin meaningful discussions with Blatchington Court Trust (a charity that supports around 600 0 to 30 year old VI CYP across Sussex, primarily in East Sussex, Brighton & Hove) about how we can work with them to fill the gaps in their provision in West Sussex, which will not only be a win/win for both organisations, but more importantly, it will be a huge boost to VI CYP and their families in West Sussex who currently aren’t able to access any services. Because the Compass West Sussex data is so accurate, we know that the work we are planning to do with Blatchington Court really could make a difference to almost 500 children and young people and their families, and that is really exciting!” he says.